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Vail, Theodore Newton

Vermont

Brattleboro, Vt.

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Box 27

VERMONT

AN ADDRESS

BY

THEODORE N. VAIL

BEFORE

THE GREATER VERMONT
ASSOCIATION

BRATTLEBORO, VT.
MAY 13, 1915

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF
THEO. N. VAIL

VERMONT
AN ADDRESS
BY
THEODORE N. VAIL
BEFORE
THE GREATER VERMONT
ASSOCIATION

BRATTLEBORO, VT
MAY 13, 1915

Mr. 31, 1916-13 B3.

VERMONT

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:—

I am glad to have again the pleasure of meeting with this Association, and particularly under such pleasant auspices and in this pleasant and beautiful city.

Brattleboro, from the viewpoint of the railroad, I have long known, but all my desire and intentions to visit the city have until now come to nothing.

It is encouraging to know that the local boards of trade are co-operating with the Greater Vermont Association in its endeavor to bring about a Greater Vermont. It can only be done by a united and continuing pull in the right direction—by all working for the common good, and looking at everything from the broad standpoint of the commonwealth, not from the narrow standpoint of either an individual or a single community. The interests of this State as of the world are too broad, too big, too diversified, to be treated in any other than in a broad, big way. Co-operative, united efforts concentrated on particular endeavors can accomplish much for all. Scattered, selfish, individual effort, not centered on a general purpose, can accomplish little for the community however much for the individual, and no individual can greatly or permanently thrive in a stagnant or a decadent community.

Since the last meeting of this body much of great interest has passed. Events which at that time were thought impossible have taken place. The world is convulsed and disturbed by the great struggle which is now going on between the great

powers of the Eastern Continent, directly involving all the minor powers and indirectly but vitally the rest of the world. All the teachings of centuries of civilization and of Christianity seem to be wiped out by savage brutality and disregard of humanity, decency, or the common rights of man. Economic conditions are either so changed or so affected, that all observation and all observers are confused and undecided. Our domestic economic conditions, interwoven, interdependent, are so influenced and affected by the foreign conditions that it is impossible to determine what would have been the effect of the recent legislative and political changes in our national economic policy. All industries and all enterprise not directly helped by the abnormal war conditions are in a state of paralysis, stagnation or hesitation that accompanies uncertainty. Who can forecast what is to come, or what is to be when these abnormal conditions come to an end? All that can be done is to keep everything well in hand, and as events point out a course, act with discretion and with strong effect, and when happenings which outrage our sense of right, such as the most recent terrible one take place, act not in haste, anger or excitement and ineffectively, but with coolness and full consideration and when we do act, let that action be such as will be effective.

So far as Vermont is concerned, with some few exceptions, everything has been going on fairly well, and conditions are what would have been considered good in times past. Prices and demand for our agricultural and other products have been fairly well sustained.

Vermont, however, is peculiarly and favorably situated, in that its products are such as have a more or less continuous demand, even when econ-

omy and curtailment is being practiced by all, and a large percentage of the consumers are living on their savings or the savings or work of others.

All things combine to bring our attention closer to what may be necessary for Vermont's future.

This city is practically the gateway from the South and Southwest, to the whole of the eastern slope of the Green Mountains and to the White Mountain section and to the beautiful valley of the Northern Connecticut.

Travel, trade, intercourse, always follow the path of the least resistance.

What we want is unbroken, uninterrupted communication in all directions both inside our State and connecting our State with the other sections of our country. The improvement of our roads, made through the common-sense and foresighted policy of our recent commissioner, our present Chief Executive, has made them known as the best and most continuously dependable of any in the United States, and fully as good if not better for the purposes than the highways leading to us through other States. We are attracting the motor car tourist, and if we can only convince those working on our highways that a motor car in difficulty because of bad spots in the road, or because of unsuitable by-passes around places being repaired, is a thing to be assisted and not jeered at and made fun of, and that a little courtesy to those who are attracted to the beauties of our country is not servile subserviency or beneath any person—our State will become one of the most popular and frequented, as it is one of the most attractive resorts of this country. This is not any particular criticism of the methods and manners of our public, but of a few individual cases. We should always remember that one discourtesy in the time of

trouble and irritation will counteract the pleasing effect of hundreds of courteous, helpful acts.

If we can only make as much progress with our railroad communication, all will go well. We must have the bumps and jerks, junction connections, lay-overs, the dreaded uncertainty of a missed connection, all eliminated. Much has been done; and much more can be done, if we will only get at a sane view of the situation.

There are a few underlying principles governing public service enterprises which are either not always understood or known, or the importance of them, if known, not fully appreciated.

The public is as much dependent upon our public service enterprises as public service enterprises are dependent upon the public.

In the long run the public can receive no more than it pays for. Proper and sufficient compensation for service is an absolute necessity in order that good service may be demanded and received. When the expenses of a corporation are increased because of increase in wages, cost of material and public demand for improvements, it is necessary to increase the revenue to meet them. It is no longer possible to meet these increased expenses by operating improvements or changes.

A railroad no more than an individual can exist without sufficient income to meet expenses. For a time either can live on accumulated surplus of "money" or "avoirdu pois," but that exhausted, a process of slow starvation sets in with only one inevitable end, if continued indefinitely.

I hold no briefs for railroads. Quite the contrary; as a citizen of the State and a part of the State most affected, I am not only interested but have made some attempts to assist in correcting existing irregularities, with unpleasant consequences.

Much of the present feeling toward corporations is based on wrong ideas as to traffic and traffic regulations and the relations between capitalization and operation. It is believed that capitalization, and the manipulation of capital, is the cause of existing difficulties. However much unreasonable capitalization or the manipulation of stocks may be condemned and deplored, one thing must be remembered and that is, capitalization, honest or dishonest, cannot affect the earnings of the road.

Promoters and so-called financiers may monkey with and manufacture capital, but after all it is more or less like manipulating the cards in a certain game which all over our country is said to be very popular in this State—which every *native-born* Vermonter is supposed to understand, but a game I never have witnessed in the state of Vermont. (Take notice of the words "*native-born Vermonter*.")

Stock manipulation and gambling is as a rule a game at which money changes hands; the public is neither richer nor poorer. Innocent individuals, over-credulous investors who do not purchase through safe channels, or small speculator-gamblers who think they are smarter than those who follow the business for ill-gotten profit and tempt them by so-called "inside information" and "pointers," all these may suffer but the money remains, it only changes hands. Capital or wealth can only be lost to the community as a whole by being invested in enterprises of unprofitable character.

Wealth comes from production and constructive development of useful works that serve the necessities or convenience of the public, or the improvement of methods and the elimination of waste and extravagance in the operation of those already

existing, and no one can reasonably object to those who engage in this constructive progressive development having a share in the earned increment to values of property produced in this way. If one can bring great benefits to the community, certainly that one is entitled to a share of such benefits.

The usefulness of a railroad or its importance to any community is determined in a large way by the character of its plant and the facilities it affords, and this in turn depends on its prosperity, on its having a surplus revenue over all necessary expenditure. The existing difficulties are entirely due to the fact that the gross revenue from traffic has, owing to trade conditions, either remained stationary or if it has increased, the increase has not kept pace with the increase of operating expenses.

Revenue is determined by the character of the country which is entirely dependent upon the road, the traffic it affords, and the command of profitable competitive traffic from sections beyond its terminals. Character of its permanent way, equipment and efficiency of operation, wages and cost of material, determine the expense of operation, and the two together determine the surplus. Rates for traffic are in these days almost if not entirely beyond the power of the roads to fix. They are controlled or regulated by state or national commissions or fixed by state legislatures. They are substantially the same for all roads, the good and the bad, the lines of concentrated traffic and the lines of sparse traffic. The particular danger to our roads is that our local traffic is light, and the through traffic is the most aggressively competitive traffic that exists and is contributed by roads beyond the power of the regulation which controls our roads.

To a certain extent wages are beyond the power of any single road to fix. Traffic and living conditions and public sympathy with the laboring man have a large and generally controlling influence in case of disputes. No one objects to the best of wages for the best of service, *but wages and service are so directly related that one must control the other*. If the man rendering the service gets more compensation for the same work, then the service must bring more remuneration—if not, where are the wages paid to come from? If there is an increase in the work performed for the increase of wages, then and then only can wages be increased without increasing cost of service. Improvements in methods, economies in operation, scientific and intelligent organization and operation, have enabled greater service to be obtained by the same or less effort, but the irreducible minimum in this direction has about been reached by railroads.

The prosperity and well-being of a road depends upon its having a reasonable surplus revenue after wages, supplies and other items necessary for the operation and proper maintenance of a road are taken care of. If there is not revenue enough to meet these, there can be no surplus, and if there is no surplus there must be deterioration or starvation. Without dependable surplus the road can neither spend money on proper maintenance or provide for depreciation, and it has no power or ability to raise capital for improvement or extension.

Without surplus, roads cannot be maintained or improved, for there is neither revenue surplus to be applied to that purpose or to pay for or secure capital.

Unfortunately, in Vermont, except for the

through traffic, our railroad traffic is limited, and the very thing which makes our country so beautiful makes difficult construction and costly operation; these, with the distance from fuel, put our railroads in the doubtful column as to the balance of expenses and revenue.

Uniform rates are based on average costs of operation over the whole section to which they apply. With approximately uniform rates, as other connecting and competing roads, our Vermont roads have difficulty in making revenue meet expenses, while the more favorably situated roads with their concentrated traffic and more economical operating possibilities show large surplus. It costs more to build the same road and to operate it per unit of traffic over our mountains or through our upper valleys than it does in the broad lower valleys, where the traffic of course is heavier.

As an example, the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain road is expensive to build and to operate. Its traffic is light, yet it is as important to the communities on its lines as the Boston and Albany to its communities. It contributes very largely to the prosperity and well-being of an important section of the State. At uniform rates, or rates the same as those of other roads, the revenue from the traffic on its line would not pay operating expenses, while at the same ratio the traffic it contributes is profitable to the trunk lines. Such a road can only be successfully operated in combination with the lines to which it acts as a feeder, and the greater the system, the more thorough the combination of feeding and distributing lines in territories of sparse traffic with trunk lines, the better the service and the more equitable the distribution of profits.

In fact, it is only through such combination that territories of sparse traffic can get reasonable rates and good service.

The tendency of all wise "railroad system" construction and upbuilding in the past has been to combine the trunk lines with feeding and distributing lines and with extensions into sparse territory, so that the lines of light traffic which collect and distribute could be supported by the profitable trunk lines of concentrated traffic. This process of combination has been going on for years. The road from White River to Springfield is made up of many originally independent lines. The road from Newport to Boston was built by a number of separate companies. In fact, there were originally in New England many hundreds of separate roads now merged into the three or four big systems.

We do not want to go back to those old conditions. We do not want any more competitive or parallel lines. What we want are roads through sections not now reached, extensions and cross-country connections of those now existing, and what we want is to have our systems so arranged that the richer or more prosperous roads will carry the light traffic roads, so that we will have through trains, through connections and quick transit for both passengers and freight.

This is an important thing for the State of Vermont. It is emphasized by the fact, which I think indisputable, that no railroad or railroad system in the State of Vermont, operated independently, has been continuously prosperous and profitable, except possibly those roads in the Connecticut valley below White River Junction, which were the tunnel or trunk lines through or over which passed all the traffic from all the feeding, distributing

and connecting lines from and through Vermont and beyond.

I am simply calling this to your attention because the question is vital and one that must be met by your Legislature or Railroad Commission, and a proper public understanding is necessary that when they in their wisdom may act it will meet with public approval.

The development of these necessary facilities will enable our produce to reach the markets quickly. Time in transport is of more importance than cheapness to all our agricultural products. All the dairy products are not only perishable, but there is sentiment about freshness in milk and eggs, vegetables, and like produce, which is of great value. To reduce the time one-half on such products, you could afford to pay double the transportation charges.

But there is no use in getting better facilities unless you also use more intelligence, not only in the care of your produce, but in its production.

It is the interdependent, co-operative development of all branches of industry and the extensive improvement and high grade operation of all facilities of intercourse and intercommunication that make communities or countries prosperous and good places to live in.

Freshness in milk, for instance, is entirely dependent upon care in its production and handling. Milk put into the can fresh from the cow, with the animal heat unreduced, rattled over rough roads in a springless wagon to the station, standing exposed for hours to the sun, under conditions which make the original bacterial family in the milk contented and happy, and develop all their productive powers, cannot be expected to sell at the same price as certified milk. Certified milk brings

from three to five times the price of ordinary fresh milk.

Why is it that Oregon apples can be sent to our home markets? An Oregon apple is raised in an orchard which is valued away up in the thousands of dollars per acre. It is transported to markets at a cost of five or ten times as much and sells at from three to four times the retail price of an ordinary Vermont apple. Vermont can and does raise as good apples as does Oregon. It can, and in a few instances does, take as good care of them. The Vermont apple can, and those properly cared for do, sell for as much as the Oregon apple. The Vermont apple can and does taste as good as an Oregon apple. That this is so has been demonstrated by a few of our agriculturists. Why not by all?

Vermont can raise strawberries of as good if not better flavor and appearance, as any State in the Union.

Vermont potatoes properly raised and cared for are sought for in the South for seed. Their flavor and quality is as good as the famous potatoes of Colorado or Utah.

The sweet corn of Vermont cannot be surpassed, and hardly equalled.

There is no State in the Union that can equal Vermont dairy products, given the same care and attention.

In fact, in the agricultural possibilities, Vermont is ahead of any State in the Union, as a whole. Other States may have advantages as to specialties.

I have spent the past eight months in the South, from Maryland to Delaware and Florida. I have traveled and observed from train, boat and motor car. It is most wonderful how the agricultural possibilities of those States are progressing; acres

of potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, celery, lettuce, beans, peas. In Florida I saw land worth little or nothing which when made ready for planting celery, at a cost of less than a few hundreds per acre, was sold readily for a thousand to fifteen hundred per acre. I ate the celery and know that the snappy, crisp celery raised in Vermont soil adapted to its growth, of which there is an abundance in the State, would bring double the price in any market. The climate of Vermont, its short, hot, fast-growing season, gives the fruit and vegetables that belong to the temperate zone a flavor and crispness which you cannot get in a sunny, hot, long season of the tropical or semi-tropical clime.

There is lots of talk and some complaint about the years which are said to be nine months winter and the other three months early spring or late autumn, but don't make any mistake. You do not have nine months tropical summer and three months northern summer. You do not have that long continued oppressive heat that takes all the energy from a man. You can walk through the meadows and woodlands of Vermont in the spring, summer and autumn without getting covered with all sorts of nasty, irritating, vexatious insects which bore into and under your skin before you are aware of it and make your life miserable. You do not have to look out for every step or examine every bush or tree by or under which you walk, or every bunch of fruit you gather or eat, for snakes, tarantulas, scorpions. You do have nice grassy lawns and smooth pastures upon which you can throw yourself to rest or sleep, with perfect safety from vermin or beast.

You can sleep at night and wake in the morning fresh and vigorous.

Without being invidious or making comparisons, each section of our country has its peculiar advantages. We are apt to think of the advantages of the other and only the disadvantages of our own, but after nearly nine months' absence, during which I have traveled thousands of miles through all the seaboard southern States, the advantages of and delight to be found in the climate and scenery of Vermont seems to be greater than ever before.

But you must remember that to get all there is to be gotten, takes effort, intelligent and continued. In Vermont one can live as easily and cheaply as in any other country, except where one can live like primitive man or an animal on the fruits and roots that grow naturally, and needs no other covering than that which nature gave him. But if one wants to live as a civilized, intelligent man should, on any scale great or small, it can be done in Vermont with as little effort as in any place in the world.

How are we to reap all these advantages? By learning how to do things properly and then doing them, with care in the doing, care in every little detail from start to finish. *Education as to the aggregate value of infinitesimal things is the prime necessity.*

Unskilled, unintelligent labor is the most abundant and cheapest commodity in the world. The value of labor increases in direct ratio to the skill or intelligence combined with it.

Education is the first necessity to accomplishment, not only education in the particular vocation through or by which the livelihood is gained, but that foundation, that education in the elementary studies which is necessary to build upon if one wants to work intelligently or wants culture and intellectual enjoyment. That is, one must first

learn to read understandingly, spell and use the language correctly and clearly, arithmetic enough to solve all the daily problems that come in the ordinary life, geography enough to know where the other parts of one's own country and of the world are—in other words a good old-fashioned academy education. This is a fundamental necessity.

With this, and with such reading as an intelligent people inquisitive after knowledge do, one is equipped to go into any business or prepared to begin a further preparation for any classical, professional, technical or scientific pursuit. The foundation is laid for any movement in any direction, and without this foundation the work, study, or whatever one may do, will lack perfection and completion. With this foundation to work on, more and better can be got with the same or less effort than can be got without that foundation. Without it mortification, failure or deficiency will be met at every turn in any walk of life.

If in addition one can add to this foundation of common school and academic education the preparation that comes from a college course so much the better. But the graduate is apt to receive practical commercial and vocational training from his juniors of less general education. There are many advantages in getting the training in the vocation one is to follow for a livelihood at as early an age as possible before reaching that age when ignorance is a matter of shame and mortification. The only handicap to the college graduate upon entering industrial or commercial pursuits is that of age. If false pride is set aside the college education is of great benefit. It brings into operation the assimilated knowledge and experience in study. The few years spent in college in acquiring

knowledge and the facility of learning, are quickly made up. With the same ability and energy the graduate goes faster and as a rule goes much farther.

Everything that can be said in respect to individual accomplishment or possibilities is controlled, modified or amplified by his inherited or natural ability and his inherited or acquired inclination or disinclination to work, for after all you cannot get far without some sort of ability and you cannot get anything worth having without work.

I am laying particular stress on the academic, high-school, or primary or secondary education, because this is a subject which has been much in evidence since the Educational Commission's report has been before the public. Much criticism has been made upon that report as being against the college education.

The Commission took no such ground. It simply found that all past assistance to colleges was voluntary and not obligatory, that Vermont had no money to waste on duplication, and that further aid should be so appropriated and apportioned, as to be effectively used and so applied that whatever was given should be so distributed as to produce the best results, and also to be part of a general scheme of education which commenced with and continued up through the primary and secondary schools. It found that the primary and secondary schools were an obligation upon the State and should be put in such a position as would enable every child in the State to receive an education that was substantial and thorough and should include in the last two years of the high school, studies which were preparatory for real life. Fully ninety-five per cent. of our people, of all people in this world, must depend upon their own efforts for a

livelihood, and fully ninety-five per cent. of those must follow manual industrial pursuits. In these days of automatic and perfected machinery and ready-made articles for daily use and wear, there is little chance or opportunity for the boy or girl to get the home drill in the use of his hands that he used to get in the days when much of all that was eaten, used or worn, was of home production and home construction, and when there were none or very few mechanical aids in domestic operations. The boy cannot now get the drilling in the use of his hands and brains even in industrial pursuits that he used to get under the apprenticeship system. Under these changed conditions, without any preliminary training in the use of his hands, the boy goes into a shop, is put on an automatic machine which he can master in a few weeks, gets good wages for a boy, but is learning nothing, and unless he is ambitious and self-sacrificing as to his leisure time or shows some extraordinary genius, he is at sixty no further along than at sixteen. The home life of the girl in the present age of prepared and ready-made food and clothes, with a school life which occupies, with the necessary hours for recreation, about all her waking hours, marries and establishes her home unprepared for its obligations or duties.

It is not therefore unreasonable, nor is it depriving the youth of any chances in life to provide for this essential foundation training for all; that an industrial training more or less extensive should be available for the ninety per cent. who will never go to college. It is not unreasonable to insist that whatever may be appropriated for the higher education should be so appropriated as to best supplement and fit in with the public school system. The industrial training which could be

obtained during the last two years of high school will do no damage, it spoils no chances or opportunities; it will enable those who, either wholly or in part, have to provide for themselves, to provide better through their ability to earn more, and if there is still the ambition or desire for higher education, more time can be given to study. Time at that period of life is golden.

The foundations for a greater and better Vermont are to be found in a better and more thorough primary and secondary education for *all* than is to be had by *all* now. It is to be found in thoroughness, intelligent and co-operative effort applied to the doing of whatever can be done.

Farm fewer acres, but farm them better; keep fewer cows, but keep better ones. Diversify your industries. Whatever the work is, look first at the utility of it. Make neighborhood, town or county associations, and engage in the production of some specialties on a large scale. By co-operation and production on a sufficient scale you can make and control your own markets.

Whatever you manufacture or produce in the State, make it at least as good, and as much better than that of any other as you can.

If we can make a greater Vermont it must be through industrial development and the largest of these is from the industrial pursuits connected with the products of the earth. There has been much discussion about the manufacturing development of Vermont. Whatever is done in such direction and much is possible, must be done along special lines, or along lines which we can manufacture and market in competition with other places. The greater the local development on these lines the greater the demand for the products of the soil and the more remunerative the price.

Always remember that when you ship your produce to distant markets for consumption, the price the producer gets is minus the freight, but when the home consumption is greater than the home production the price is plus the freight.

The magnitude of this development depends on that kind of initiative and enterprise which has made the Vermonter so prominent in the development of other sections. The fields outside the State are not so broad, open or virgin as they once were, and there is keen local competition, but if the rising generation of boys is given a thorough foundation in elementary knowledge, a little and a right industrial training, taught how to use his head and hands in conjunction and give his efforts to home development, and can find the girl who has enough education to be a good and interesting companion and enough domesticity and knowledge of home life to be a good wife and make a good comfortable home, it is possible that what has been said about manufacturing in Vermont as differentiated from an industrial Vermont may come true. But development in your purely rural industries, stimulated by the same preparation, will bring the quickest and most certain returns with the least capital, and is within the reach of all.

But you, gentlemen, who are engaged in commercial and professional pursuits, as necessary to the well-being of the community as that of a producer, for you the doctors keep them well, you the ministers and lawyers, keep them straight or if they do not go straight set them so; and you merchants and dealers, market their products and collect for them the necessary things from all over the world—you also will well profit by this greater Vermont in volume of trade and increased demands upon your services. Do not let the dealers

or merchants be disturbed if there are co-operative efforts among the farmers to purchase some of their necessary supplies or market some of their produce. Every dollar saved by the farmer must be spent or invested in some way, and the spending and investing will create more business in more lines, with more profit, than you lose in the trade they can do co-operatively.

It is the income from accumulated savings, invested in profitable enterprises and industries from which all waste and extravagance are eliminated, which makes for permanent prosperity in any community, and where prosperity is there is always to be found good business.

Proper support and individual aid is necessary for the work. There must be some agents and officers of such an association who must devote most, if not all, their time to such work. This takes some money, for agents and officials must live and travel, and living, travel, printing, stationery, office and clerk hire cost something.

Such an effort if not sustained by all will soon fall to the ground. We take little or no interest in things that someone else is supporting for us. If we are sharing in the support we feel a proprietary interest. We feel not only that we have a right but an obligation to share in its counsels and its benefits.

So far this Association has not received the support it deserves. It has done good work and won, I believe, the confidence of the thinking and active public of the State. It has established itself as something needed and something practicable. Unless it does receive more support in the future than it has in the past there can be but one result. Our representative must be supported materially as well as by words and good cheer.

You are familiar with what it has done under the heavy handicap it has had and, gentlemen, it is up to you and your friends and the advocates of a greater Vermont to give this Association such support as will enable those who are devoting their time and energy to its work, to work out its purpose instead of devoting their time, or most of it, to raising funds or worrying as to whether they can meet even the small expenditures with which they have so far managed to get along.

This support should be ample and generous, as the work you desire done is broad and comprehensive.

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**END OF
TITLE**